

Council

22 October 2020



M20/350 – M20/404

Minutes

Present:	Dame Margaret Hodge (Chair)	Ms Sarah King
	Ms Ann Ewing (Vice Chair)	Professor Paul Layzell
	Mr Nick Perryman (Vice Chair)	Mr Gerry O'Hagan
	Professor Sarah Ansari	Miss Kate Roberts
	Ms Alissa Chohan	Mr Peter Saraga
	Professor Bob Fitzgerald	Mrs Chris Shoukry
	Mrs Christine Goodyear	Mr Balram Veliath
	Mr John Gregory	Mr David Walker
	Mrs Tina Harris	Mr David Williams
	Ms Denise Keable	Mr Ian Wilson
Apologies:	Professor Michael Farthing	
Secretary:	Dr David Ashton	Deputy Principal (Operations) and Secretary to Council
Clerk	Mrs Pauline Martin	Executive Officer for Council
In attendance:	Professor Ken Badcock	Senior Vice Principal (Academic Strategy, Partnerships and Resources)
	Professor James Knowles	Senior Vice Principal (Education)
	Professor Katie Normington	Deputy Principal (Academic)
	Mrs Mary White	Chief Financial Officer
	Mr Rob Cutting	Secretariat Assistant, Secondary Minutes
Observers:	Mrs Hazel Jessop	Schools and Colleges Liaison Manager, <i>Incoming Deputy Secretary to Council</i>

1. Apologies

RECEIVED from Professor Michael Farthing. Professor Bob Fitzgerald and Mr Balram Veliath advised of their late arrival due to unavoidable commitments. M20/350

2. Membership and Terms of Reference

2.1 CONFIRMED the membership of Council for 2020/21. Professor Bob Fitzgerald was welcomed following his re-election to Council as an Academic staff member and, by virtue of this appointment, as a member of Academic Board. M20/351

2.2 AGREED the Chair and Vice-Chair (AE) to review the Council's Terms of Reference for submission to S&GC and for review at the next meeting. M20/352

3. Declaration of interests

	There were none	M20/353
4.	Minutes of the Previous meeting	
	AGREED minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2020 (M20/337 – M20/349)	M20/354
5.	Matters arising	
	There were none	M20/355
6.	Un-starring of items	
	There were none	M20/356

Major Business

7. PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE

7.1	RECEIVED a report from the Principal which noted the fast changing environment driven by short-term issues arising from the Coronavirus pandemic, by longer-term issues driven by emerging government policy and our own future sustainability.	M20/357
	NOTED the implications for Royal Holloway of likely government and international developments which would impact the developing three year strategy. More detailed responses would be developed in the strategy to address the issues, summarised as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value for money undergraduate degrees • A focus on graduate employability • Grievances around freedom of speech, political debate and ensuring a balanced education for young citizens • A changing student demographic • The place-based agenda and the impact of levelling-up • A threat to international student flows. 	M20/358
	NOTED a summary of findings in the poll of the financial outlook of UK HE institutions conducted by British Universities Finance Directors Universities UK.	M20/359
	NOTED plans and key proposals for a bureaucracy review by the DfE, OfS and UKRI in research, innovation and higher education. The focus of the DfE working with the OfS was stated as reducing unnecessary bureaucracy, ensuring the higher education regulatory system was truly proportionate, risk based, transparent and accountable. UKRI's changes were focused on reducing the burden placed on researchers and innovators applying to UKRI, whilst ensuring they continue to invest in the best ideas and people.	M20/360
	NOTED the report of student recruitment for 2020/21 as at 1 October 2020. Subsequent student number counts would take place on 15 October and 1 November and the final one, used for official funding purposes, on 1 December. The Summer 2020 student intake numbers were NOTED, with extreme caution identifying the caveats and risk factors, as leading towards a forecast that was better than the worst case scenario for the modified 2020/21 budget.	M20/361
	NOTED the most recent USS valuation reported a larger deficit than in previous valuations and required a greater dialogue around the strength of the covenant, a longer term view on deficit recovery and a need to find common ground between employers and Unions.	M20/362
	NOTED growth of the work with University of London Worldwide (UoLWW) with the imminent signing of a three-way agreement between UoLWW and Coursera for the development of a fully online business administration degree.	M20/363
7.2	RECEIVED the dashboard summarising Royal Holloway's UK newspaper league table position, following the end of the 2020 publication cycle.	M20/364

	NOTED that construction methods varied between publication and statistical manipulation of data was questionable. However, in the round, league tables provided some insight into a university's comparative performance.	M20/365
	CONSIDERED the main trends and weaknesses for the College and initial thoughts for KPI's around entry standards and graduate prospects.	M20/366
	DISCUSSED the volatility and sensitivity of league positions and AGREED to consider this further as part of a wider discussion on risk at the Strategy day.	M20/367
8.	STRATEGY	
8.1	CONSIDERED the context for the three year strategy, confirmation of its purpose and the impact of the pandemic on the renewed focus led by the need to align current and long term activities. NOTING the academic and financial ambitions for the College and the Core plan. The strategy was presented for discussion and comment prior to detailed discussion at the Council Strategy session.	M20/368
	DISCUSSED the catalyst themes which are starting to be developed alongside the core themes. This included development of the work in Challenge led research and Knowledge Exchange. The two parts of the strategy discussed in 2019 relating to the staff environment and staff equality, diversity and inclusion and environmental sustainability would be restarted for inclusion in an updated strategy early in 2021.	M20/369
	DISCUSSED for further consideration:	M20/370
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth ambitions • Partnering strategies • Future investment appetite • Environmental sustainability • Staff engagement and the cultural challenges associated with change 	
	AGREED that a final draft would be brought to the November Council for approval, considering the comments made in the discussion.	M20/371
8.2	RECEIVED the Governance dashboards which gave a view of the HE landscape and provided metrics or benchmarking data that would help Council perform its responsibilities. It was proposed that each dashboard would be received for review by the relevant Council committee at the appropriate time of year.	M20/372
	AGREED that the further development of KPI's would be discussed at the Council Strategy day	M20/373
9.	RETURN TO CAMPUS	
9.1	RECEIVED an oral report of life on campus.	M20/374
	NOTED the number of Covid-19 cases at 22 October 2020:	M20/375
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students: 17 cases at today's date with an average of 6 new cases diagnosed per day. Since the start of term 88 cases cumulatively. 240 students were in isolation. • Staff: 2 confirmed cases, with no evidence of transmission of Covid-19 from teaching activities. • 	
	The Track and Trace testing facility was now in operation on campus providing walk-in services to the College and the community for six months.	
	NOTED student discipline was generally good and students were co-operating with the restrictions on campus. A policy of small fines was in place and 80 had been issued to date. Repeat offences would result in larger penalties; 2 students had been removed from halls of residence for repeat offences.	M20/376

	NOTED that catering and accommodation were key potential areas of financial risk. Campus was quiet with catering operating at a much lower than normal level.	M20/377
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reduced capacity (370 students) in EWD due to Covid-19 had not been exceeded with only 250 students on any one day. New study spaces were being opened up. • Of the 3500 rooms on campus, 300 were not in use for social distancing and 50 were unable to be let. 2500 were occupied at present and 60 students were wanting to break the contract, 330 rooms that had been let were not currently occupied. 	
	NOTED that students were offered 50% of teaching face to face on campus and there was higher take up of online teaching. The 15-20% of students that had not yet engaged with online teaching were being looked into and there was a higher level than usual of fees not yet paid.	M20/378
	NOTED a Pulse Survey of student satisfaction identified a very high level of satisfaction with the online teaching offering but 51% of students did not feel entirely safe on campus. Focus groups were being engaged to understand these concerns and improved signposting to the support available was being provided.	M20/379
	NOTED the Government Covid-19 tiering system and implications for the College. Plans included to migrate more teaching online and support the vulnerable students and staff should the local area level be raised. NOTED that in this scenario the student experience would be affected with reduced access to team sport and indoor activities.	M20/380
9.2	RECEIVED the report of the completion of academic year 2019/20, changes made in educational provision for academic year 2020/21 to ensure a continued high quality education for students, and measures taken to ensure the resilience of our education in case of changing local or national lockdown policies.	M20/381
	NOTED that the flexible education provision had been successfully implemented for the start of the academic year, including capability to provide 50% of teaching face to face on campus. There had been a positive response from both students and staff.	M20/382
	NOTED the implementation of the huge programme of change had required a major collaborative effort and staff, across the institution, had demonstrated an impressive willingness to change in order to implement the programme and NOTED the ongoing areas of work.	M20/383
10.	FINANCE	
10.1	RECEIVED a report on the provisional results 2019/20.	M20/384
	NOTED the College's 2019/20 provisional operating surplus before the movement in USS pension provision and other gains and losses was £1.8m, compared to a forecast surplus of £2.0m.	M20/385
	NOTED the surplus before other gains and losses (the published operating surplus) included the movement in pension provision which, following the implementation of the 2018 USS valuation, had partially reversed the large reported movement in the 2018/19 accounts. As a result, the surplus before other gains and losses was £21.3m, compared to a forecast surplus of £22.3m. The final cash position was £47.5m which was in line with the forecast position of c. £47m.	M20/386
	NOTED the Financial Accounts (FRS102) Forecast added the accounting adjustments to the management accounts outturn generating a provisional total comprehensive income for the year of £13.8m, £2.4m better than forecast.	M20/387

	NOTED The provisional results were tested against the three financial covenants required by the lenders. Based on these results, the College was well within the conditions of all three financial covenants. The cash flow cover covenant had not yet been re-calculated, however given the provisional revenue and cash position it was expected that the cash flow cover loan covenant position would be broadly in line with the April forecast.	M20/388
10.2	AGREED a recommendation from Finance Committee to approve a proposal to dispose of £5.9m of project expenditure held in work in progress. The projects were not progressing as originally planned as a consequence of the increased financial risk caused by Covid-19	M20/389
11.	ACADEMIC QUALITY	
	RECEIVED the final annual report of the work undertaken by the Academic Quality and Assurance Committee. The committee's work was now included within the remit of the Students' Education and Research Committee and the members of the previous Committee were thanked for their work.	M20/390
	NOTED observations and recommendations from the committee's review of the requested Annual Review documentation and Enhanced Monitoring, in particular that there was an opportunity for less central control of the process and to align the focus of Quality Assurance within the School.	M20/391
	NOTED that the committee confirmed its assurance to Council that in relation to the quality of academic provision and the standards of awards made by the College:	M20/392
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It had received and discussed a report and accompanying action plan relating to the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and student outcomes. • This included evidence from the provider's own periodic review processes, which fully involved students and included embedded external peer or professional review. • The methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes were, to the best of Council's knowledge, robust and appropriate; • The standards of awards for which the College was responsible had been appropriately set and maintained. • The College continued to meet the standards of Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015). 	
	AGREED for the committee to report on the attainment gap and widening participation work, at an appropriate time in the committee's annual work cycle.	M20/393
12.	GOVERNANCE MATTERS	
12.1	NOTED the final 2020 Statutes following the conclusion of the special resolution process by the approval of Privy Council on 24 September 2020.	M20/394
12.2	APPROVED the appointment of Committee Chairs and NOTED committee membership	M20/395
12.3	APPROVED Committee terms of reference	M20/396

Starred items for Report and Formal Approval

13.*	Reportable Events	
	There were none	M20/397

14.*	Report of Decisions Taken by the Chair of the Governing body	None	M20/398
15.*	Report Of Decisions Taken by Circulation	None	M20/399

THE EXHIBITION BOOK

The following minutes were are provided and NOTED in the Exhibition Book: M20/400

EB1 ACADEMIC BOARD

Unsigned minutes of 3 June 2020

EB2 JNCC MEETINGS

Minutes of GMB & UNITE Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee 5 February 2020

Minutes of UCU Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee for the following meetings:

- 7 February 2019 - recirculated due to amendments
- 17 October 2019
- 5 February 2020

EB3 Minutes of Council Committee Meetings

Council Academic Quality Assurance Committee 11 June

Finance Committee 11 June 2020

Audit & Compliance Committee 15 June 2020

Council Executive 25 June 2020

Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee 14 September 2020

Finance Committee 24 September 2020 *Not yet available*

Strategy & Governance Committee 24 September 2020 *Not yet available*

Other Matters

16. Other Business

DISCUSSED the definition of a member of academic staff in Statute 1, Council's designation of staff who held academic or "non-academic" (now professional services) employment contracts and the implications for staff seeking to stand for election to Council or to vote. M20/401

NOTED that the positions of "Fellows" (including those titled Teaching, Research and Senior Fellow) were not currently designated as academic contracts. Consequently members of staff in these posts were entitled to stand or vote in elections for Council vacancies for members of Professional Services staff and not in the academic staff elections. M20/402

AGREED For the Deputy Principal (Academic) to review the current position and to recommend any changes as appropriate. M20/403

17. **Dates of next Council meetings**

MS Teams unless otherwise stated:

M20/404

- **Wednesday 18 November - Thursday 19 November 2020**, Council Strategy day and Council meeting, optional Residential, Cumberland Lodge. (details TBC and all subject to Covid-19)
- **Thursday 18 February 2021**, 17:00
- **Thursday 6 May 2021**, 17:00
- **Thursday 1 July 2021**, 17:00



Dame Margaret Hodge DBE MP
Chair of Council

Date 18 November 2020